

## **Impact of Increased Canadian Economic Development on Northern Montana Highways**

### **Background:**

Recent economic developments in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan are generating changes in commercial traffic across border crossings into Montana and along associated north-south highway corridors. In response to these developments, area elected officials and other leaders have called for expanded port services and have asked Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and its provincial counterparts to improve highways on these corridors. MDT is sponsoring this research study to determine how economic growth and change, as well as revised port services, may affect traffic volumes on Montana highways. This information will be used to inform decisions regarding future research and infrastructure needs.

This research effort has been envisioned as a two-phase process. This request covers Phase I, an assessment of current and future economic conditions and an estimate of related commercial vehicle traffic growth with and without expanded port operations. Phase II, if warranted, would identify highway impacts of the future traffic and necessary improvements along the highway corridors leading to the ports.

### **Scope-of-Work**

The scope of this study is limited to north-south highway corridors leading to the nine ports served by paved highways from the Port of Coultts-Sweet Grass to the Port of Regway-Raymond. These include Secondary Highways 232, 233, 241, and 511; Montana Highways 24, 13, and 16; US Highway 191; and Interstate 15. Impacts to traffic volumes on other highways, including US Highway 2, will also be noted if they are identified during the course of the north-south corridor analysis.

This effort will provide an assessment of current roadway conditions and forecast commercial traffic through the ports with and without port improvements. The regional scale of the economic analysis must be sufficient to capture broad multi-state and provincial linkages that may affect traffic along these corridors.

The scope of work will include the following tasks:

1. Review and summarize the relevant literature including recent regional studies.
2. Report on the condition and current level of operation for each of the identified highway corridors to include geometric and capacity characteristics, describe operational procedures and capacity at the ports of entry, and research and summarize federal issues relating to port service infrastructure and/or service expansion including national border security policies and programs.
3. Assess existing and future economic conditions, including trends in energy, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism, wholesale and retail trade sectors in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana and other states that may affect commercial transportation demand on the corridors. The analysis should consider any factors that may significantly affect north-south vehicular traffic. These may include

development of refining and distribution facilities (including pipelines), and other sector-specific developments.

The economic analysis is expected to require collection of primary data from industries and stakeholders. Proposed approaches to gathering this information should be detailed in the proposal. The contractor is responsible for conducting this work, but all contacts with other governmental agencies and the private sector must have advance approval by MDT. Data needed from state public agencies must be identified in the work plan.

4. Based on the information developed in the previous tasks, estimate future commercial traffic volumes on all corridors for 10 and 20 year planning horizons. Future traffic volumes should be estimated using the ports' current operating schedules as well as 24-hour and other scenarios. Origin and destination data may be necessary to perform portions of the traffic volumes analysis. This task should focus on data that is currently available and that can be reasonably acquired.

Based on the results of Phase I, MDT will determine what if any additional research is needed. If additional research is required, MDT will ask the contractor to either submit a new proposal or revise the previous work plan.